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**Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in
Ecuadorian public high schools**

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACIÓN DE LA DIRECTORA DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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De mi consideración:

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Loja, febrero de 2014

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DEDICATION

Liliana: I dedicate this thesis to God who has given me the strength to never give up. I also dedicate it to my husband and my two beautiful daughters who have always supported me with their love.

Verónica: This thesis is lovingly dedicated to God and my parents, who have given me their unconditional love and the discipline to tackle any challenge with determination to achieve my goals.

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We are heartily thankful to our teachers whose encouragement, guidance, and support have carried us to finish our project successfully.

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ABSTRACT

This research is based on the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools. The purpose of this study was to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process.

This research was done in Quito, five public high-schools were considered, and the selected sample was fifteen teachers of the 8th, 9th, and 10th years of basic education, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of senior high school. Also, students from the 8th, 9th, and 10th years of basic education, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of senior high school were randomly selected.

The method used to carry out this research was quantitative, and the techniques used were surveys and note taking. Besides, some instruments were used such as questionnaires and observation formats for teachers and students.

The principal finding gotten from this research was that the two main factors that affect the English teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools are the class size and the number of students in the classrooms.

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KEY WORDS: EFL teaching, factors, public high schools, process.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación se basa en los factores que afectan el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en las escuelas secundarias públicas ecuatorianas. El propósito de este estudio fue analizar los factores que afectan el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés.

Esta investigación se realizó en Quito, se consideraron cinco escuelas secundarias públicas, y la muestra seleccionada fue de quince maestros de octavo, noveno y décimo año de educación básica superior; y primero, segundo y tercer año de bachillerato. Además, se seleccionaron al azar a los estudiantes de octavo, noveno y décimo año de educación básica superior y primero, segundo y tercer año de bachillerato.

El método utilizado para llevar a cabo esta investigación fue cuantitativo, y las técnicas utilizadas fueron las encuestas y la toma de notas. Además, se han utilizado algunos instrumentos, como cuestionarios y formularios de observación para profesores y estudiantes.

El principal hallazgo obtenido de esta investigación fue que los dos principales factores que afectan el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje de Inglés en las escuelas secundarias públicas ecuatorianas son el tamaño de las clases y el número de alumnos en las aulas.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Enseñanza en EFL, factores, colegios públicos, proceso.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the learning of English language is considered something very essential. It is used in almost all areas of knowledge and human development. Regrettably, most of the students of Ecuador that finish high-school recognize that they do not have a good level of English that will allow them to have an effective academic development. Consequently, students often lose a lot of opportunities such as jobs with better payment, trips, immersion programs, opportunities to improve their creativity and self-confidence to develop any work that involves English. For this reason, it is essential to do a research about the factors that affect the English language-teaching learning process, especially in Ecuadorian public high schools, in order to find out some practical alternatives that will help to the improvement of the students' English level and to the teaching - learning process.

To carry out this research, some specific objectives were considered. The first one was to determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place. The second one was to identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers. And the third one was to determine teachers' instructional competence.

Previous researches that have been done about the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process indicate that there are different kinds of factors that must be taken into account in order to get positive results. These factors are related to teachers, students, and the environment in which the class given is developed.

In this way, Ames and Archer (1988) reveal in their study how specific motivation patterns are related to the salience of mastery and performance goals in actual classroom settings, which provide a meaningful way of differentiating perceptions of the students about the classroom learning environment. These perceptions showed different patterns of relation with learning strategies, preference for challenging tasks, attitude toward the class and beliefs about the cause of success and failure. There wasn't any limitation in the development of this study.

Also, the study of Snow (2002) was done with the purpose to know about the perceptions and experiences of secondary school teachers, related to their use of classroom space, and clarify that smaller class sizes contribute to the sense of teachers of well-being and effectiveness while poor maintenance and overcrowding were associated with feelings of frustration. The author did not have any limitation in this study.

Finally, Abella and Salinas (2006), presented another case study related to the learning styles in low-level learners in a private school in Bogota, which main purpose was to discover what roles do learning styles play in the English language learning process for students with low academic performance and, which factors allow these students to explore their learning styles during the English language learning process. Although, there were any limitations, the writers conclude that the incorporation of learning styles facilitated the learning process.

The teaching-learning process will give stimulus to teachers, educational institutions, and authorities who will be the responsible to apply the correct strategies in order to satisfy the students' needs, a continuous teacher training, an efficient

institutional equipment purchases, and development of tactics that will improve the mentioned process.

For this reason, this research offers a lot of benefits for teachers, students, and for educational institutions; since the objective is to have a constant search of an improvement of their English knowledge in every stage of education. Besides, teachers and students could have an optimal level with technically established international standards.

On the other hand, educational institutions gave the necessary support to the researchers during their field research, so, fortunately the investigators did not have any kind of limitations in the process.

METHOD

Settings and Participants

This research was done in five public high schools located in the historical center of Quito city. The selected data for this research was fifteen English teachers and students of the 8th, 9th, and 10th years of basic education, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of senior high school. Additionally, students were in an age range between 12 and 17 years old.

Procedures

This research was supported by bibliographical material which was researched and obtained in many libraries of different universities, United States Embassy, and public educational institutions. The revision of this bibliographic material was necessary to build up the Literature Review, which is the scientific base to issue comments about the researched topic.

The main topics that support this thesis are: importance of teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador, teaching approaches, teaching methods, teaching techniques, managing learning, lesson design, class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, teaching resources, classroom observation, students' motivation, learning styles, and students intelligence.

The general approach used in this research was quantitative. The field research was carried out in five public high-schools, where five English teachers of each one of the institutions were selected.

The techniques used for the data collection were surveys, observation, interview, and note taking process, along with instruments such as observation sheets, a questionnaire for students and another for teachers, and an interview format.

In a first place, it was asked to fifteen teachers and fifteen students to answer a questionnaire. The teachers' questionnaire consisted on twenty questions in English about the different factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process, and the students' questionnaire consisted on fourteen questions in Spanish about the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process.

At the same time, researchers had their own sheets with all the details of the observations done to the teachers and their students in the classroom. It was applied a technique of a meticulous observation and concentration to take into account all the details that contained the English teaching-learning process.

The data tabulation was based on the fifteen observed classes, and all the obtained results were taken into account with the purpose to develop the corresponding statistics.

The aspect considered for the analysis of results was the revision in a detailed form of the given answers by the teachers and students, supporting this information with the citations of different authors collected from the literature review, the observations that the researchers did in the classroom during the class was given, and with the personal opinion of the investigators according to their perceptions according to the researched topics and all the acquired knowledge.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

Ecuador is a beautiful country with an extensive richness that stands out its variety in culture and biodiversity. But, really does it have richness in all sense? Ecuador needs to have wealth of knowledge too and, as part of its success, nothing is more useful that acquire knowledge on a foreign language. Therefore, the development of the capabilities of the Ecuadorians to a high level of education becomes one of the most important pillars to face the difficulties of a world that is undergoing major crisis and with little favorable conditions of life. At the same time, it also will help to improve the skills of the students and it enables them to be integral people and human beings of quality. For this reason, teaching English as a foreign language in all stages of education is very important because it allows learners to understand different cultures, become competent in different areas and be able to get new achievements beating all the new challenges that they find on the way applying their own knowledge, experience, and cultural heritage.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

To improve the quality of language teaching, language researchers have discovered and proposed approaches and methods giving answers to all the questions that arise in the process of teaching. In order to understand this topic, the definition of approach and method will be provided.

According to Harmer (2007, p. 62-63), approach is a grouping of ideas that try about the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach gives detailed principles about how language is used, namely its application since how people acquire

the knowledge of the language until the conditions that can improve a positive learning. On the other hand, a method makes reference to put into practice the selected approach. In other words, a method becomes in the practical form of the objective of teaching. Also, a method includes various procedures and techniques to get the objective proposed.

The first method that will be analyzed is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as its name indicates, this approach emphasizes in the continuous interaction as the goal of learning a language, as something that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. Apart from this, CLT is a theory of language teaching that is not just about the language, it is about how it is used. In addition, Communicative Language Teaching focuses on students having enough exposure and opportunities to language and its usage; with the appropriate motivation it is obtained fruitful results (Harmer 2007, p. 69-70). As a matter of fact, this approach typically involves students in real or realistic communication with a successful achievement using communicative tasks that have the same importance as the accuracy of their language use (Harmer 2007, p. 50).

The Natural Approach is one of the, "language teaching methods based on observation and interpretation of how learners acquire both first and second languages in non-formal settings." (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 190). Moreover, this approach focuses on input, comprehension, and meaningful communication and puts less emphasis on grammar, teacher monologues, direct repetition and accuracy. Thus, the correct materials can help to get the aim in a natural approach, making activities and

tasks as meaningful as possible that anyway facilitate acquisition and promote comprehension and real communication.

On the other hand, according to Olsen and Kagan (1992), Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) “is a group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others”. This approach is part of a more general instructional approach also known as Collaborative Learning (CL) and it takes advantage of the learning with activities of cooperation that involve activities in pairs or groups which can help students to develop some skills as to be a good leader and to improve the ability to work with others as a team.

Another approach analyzed is Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in which teaching is arranged according to the data that students need. CBI is designed to provide second-language learners instruction in content and language. In addition, Krahnke (1987, p. 65) offers the following definition: “It is the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught”.

With reference to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an approach that focuses in the application of tasks, those pieces of work as central units of planning and teaching. Furthermore, TBLT makes emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language remembering that real communication is something basic for language learning. Indeed, the activities and tasks can have different purposes,

one applied in real life and another in a pedagogical form (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 223).

To continue, Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching method built around the use of physical movement in a combination between speech and action. Another thing is that this method allows students to have a positive response to language without thinking too much giving as a result the improvement of their retention and the opportunity to lose nervousness (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 73).

In regards to Whole Language, it is a movement against the fact to teach reading and writing when these should be taught as a “whole”. “If language isn’t kept whole, it isn’t language anymore” (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 108). For this reason, Whole Language is an approach that emphasizes learning in a natural reading and writing with main focus on real communication.

Related to the grammar-translation method, it is considered a traditional method; this method is a way of studying a language that focuses in the use of grammatical rules and their application to translation of sentences from the native language into the target language and vice versa. However, it fails to give students opportunities to activate their own knowledge, because if they constantly apply translation, they are not using the L2 for communication (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 5).

Teaching Techniques

Techniques are a wide range of resources that teachers use to help students progress toward real control of the language they are teaching while motivating them to continue their study of English. For instance, it is possible to use students and teachers clothing or the things that they are wearing. Besides to teach appropriate vocabulary

before using pictures or other materials, it is recommendable to use dialogues wherever possible, varying the type of student participation for the different parts of the lesson. Simplifying and adapting stories which teachers can tell their students, using the community resources and bringing the people in the community into their program. (Finochiario 1964, p. 101-103).

There are a great number of techniques that can be used to improve the achievement of students in the scholar schedule and classroom as learning context, for instance routines and transitions. According to Fleta (2006 p. 51-62), “Routines are actions that carry out daily to children making sense of new language from familiar experiences”. Linguistic routines use the same expressions during scholar routines as: “Good morning, come in, take your coat off, hang your coat on your peg and sit on the carpet”, so routines, repetitions, mime facilitate the interaction between teacher and children. “Transitions are periods of time among activities”. Schreiner (n. d.) defines another important technique. “Scaffolding is a common technique when teachers provide heavy support at the beginning and gradually withdraw this support as students develop the capacity to perform more independent tasks”.

Managing Learning

Managing Learning covers the importance of the given instructions by the teacher for the activities in the class, specific time for each task, and finally feedback to be sure of the comprehension of the topics taught. Classroom management involves decisions and actions. For this reason, to give instructions as part to manage the class is a very important point. Instructions must be simple but at the same time logical, properly planned and structured which do not confuse students and they are easy to understand

(Harmer 2007, p. 36-37). Aside from that, teachers can apply good feedback that becomes in a tool for the improvement of the classroom. It can create a positive environment in which students see constructive criticism as a good thing and like a form to reinforce the fact that the practice is the basic base for a learning of quality (Brookhart 2008, p. 1-2).

Lesson Design

Writing a good lesson plan requires some skills that will help teachers to communicate their instructional activities regarding specific subject-matter. Therefore, it is indispensable for teachers to develop a good guide to support their lessons and courses. Most lesson plans contain: “Student learning objectives, instructional procedures, approaches and activities, the required materials or equipment, the timetable fit,, and some written description about the problems of the students” (Gower, Phillips & Walters 1983, p. 176-178).

Woodward (2001, p. 180-181) states that “Planning is what most working teachers do...” and suggest to consider the following: “The students, thinking of the content, materials and activities that could go into a course or lesson, jotting this down, having a quiet ponder, cutting things out magazines and anything else that you feel will help you to teach well and the students to learn a lot.” Whatever form a lesson plan takes, it is a useful tool that can help teachers make decisions, solve instructional problems, deal with classroom management issues, record progress, and be accountable to peers or supervisors (Celce 1991, p. 419-425).

Class size

Class size emphasizes about the number of students that each class has and the techniques to be used according to this number. Class size can be considered as a factor in relation to teaching and learning. It is a factor that influences and causes effects inside classroom processes and, at the same time, it affects the interaction between teachers and pupils. Additionally, there are two extremes of the class size analysis: one-to-one teaching and large classes. An advantage of one-to-one teaching is that it allows the teacher to focus on one person and the student has the opportunity to take advantage of this personalized teaching. Like a disadvantage, this type of teaching can become boring and tired because the dynamic of a large class is missing. On the other hand, large classes present good challenges because if it is true that giving personal attention to each student is more difficult, at the same time, a larger number of students allows better interaction and there would not be boredom. However, the real success of the classroom does not depend of its size; otherwise, it depends on the ability of the teacher to manage this challenge and to avoid a disaster (Harmer 2007, p. 122-127).

Classroom space

It is certainly known that teachers cannot choose the environment in which they work every day; additionally, “Most classrooms where not designed after paradise, but there are ways to make them more suitable for learning, even in the worst situations.”

For which if we use creativity and remain flexible, there are ways to make the physical environment more comfortable for learning Dörnyei and Murphey (2003, p. 74- 88).

Public schools will frequently have smaller classes, there classrooms may not be as quite

appropriate as those which are specially designed for teaching and learning (Harmer 2007, p. 121).

Another planning consideration is arranging the physical environment of the room so that the job of teaching and the task of learning are accomplished as efficiently as possible; so, all the students can see the board, overhead the projector screen, and other instructional aids all the time. The teacher can move from one aid to another, such as from the overhead to a map, without having the students to turn the desks around themselves (Kauchak and Eggen 1993, p. 361).

Seating Arrangement

The position in which the teacher and the students are located in the classroom has great importance. At the same time, the placement of chairs and desks exert significant influences upon the status of the students occupying them, the patterns of participation, various leadership opportunities, and the affective potential of group members. Gower, Phillips & Walters (1983, p. 21-24) focuses in the following: Classroom furniture in one way or another causes an effect in the learning atmosphere but at the same time the situation of seating arrangement has some constraints mainly in time and help. In this way, Horseshoe arrangement is used for no more than sixteen students, with moveable desks, tables or seminar chairs. It allows an easy face-to-face contact between the students and between teachers and the students. Double horseshoe, is used for more than sixteen students. Café Style arrangement is applied when the teacher can group the students around tables. Additionally, Dörnyei & Murphey (2003, p. 80) proposed: Traditional teacher-fronted seating structure considered the most traditional spatial arrangement with a distribution of columns and rows of desks and

chairs with the students facing the teacher is a very effective arrangement for the students. To have or not to have desks, if it is true that desks can be seen like a private territory, at the same time can create a feeling of closeness and enhance interpersonal communication. Semi-circular seating structure, allows students to have direct visual contact with each other to increase communication. Circular seating structure, enables having equal influences. On the other hand, people seated opposite to each other interact more than people who are seated side-by-side. Ad hoc clusters of chairs/desks, here the teacher can reinforce the autonomy and responsibility of the student; and tasks in small groups are particularly useful. Separate tables, these facilitate the teacher to work when students sit in small groups at individual tables.

Besides an appropriate seating arrangement, Harmer (2007, p. 41-44) mentions different kinds of works such as: Whole class interaction, when two students talk across the classroom under the control of the teacher, it gives other students the opportunity to hear, there is no need to change the position of the seats. Pairwork, it is a cooperative activity when the students work together in pairs but depending of the activity to realize. Groupwork, where it is considered how the seats are arranged depends on the size of the class, the size of the groups, the types of activity and the style of the furniture. Groupwork allows students to participate more actively. Individual work is the best option to take a test. Solowork, where students can work with their own speed allows them thinking time and allows them to be individuals. Class-to-class is a good opportunity to promote the interaction between different classes through surveys, discussions, lectures, and presentations.

Classroom and/or teaching resources

Teaching resources offer an interesting way to facilitate instruction; therefore, teachers must understand that there is not flexibility in the materials and resources teachers must use to teach from. Instead they can find flexibility and creativity in the way in which they choose to present materials, to vary their presentation and to keep the interest of the learners. Gower, Phillips & Walters (1983, p. 277-281) look at how the teacher can use different resources to make lessons more effective and interesting. Finocchiaro (1964, p. 85-101) states “There are some many devices and approaches which can supplement the textbook and often even the teacher’s voice that it seems a pity for the alert teacher not to make use of them...” However, materials for learning can be found almost everywhere. In conclusion, “Good teachers can be better teachers when they have plenty of materials to work with” (Clarck 1981, p. 277-281).

Classroom Observation

Inside the processes of learning and teaching it is recommendable to spend time applying the act of observing. Like all process, it must have an order and in the case of observation, first it is important to establish an objective, and then it is a good idea to identify the particular observational tool that is going to be used. Nunan (1989, p. 82-83) makes reference to classroom observation schemes that are used for the analysis and description of a series of teacher and learner behaviours and interactions in classrooms. These schemes can be: recording procedures, item type, multiple coding, real-time coding, source of variables, intended purpose, unit of analysis, and focus. In addition, Wallace (1991, p. 75-76) states that some advantages of classroom observation are that it becomes in a useful tool to justify the teaching process with real data and; some

disadvantages of classroom observation like criticisms that it receives. Moreover, Lightbown & Spada (1999, p. 93-95) make reference to the different ways in which researchers have observed which can be in natural acquisition settings, in traditional instructional settings, and in communicative instructional settings.

Students' motivation

As it is known, the motivation of the students and their desire to learn play an important role in their learning process. The relationship between learning and affective factors has been the subject of many investigations, which have yielded interesting theories about how to make that relationship.

The terms Instrumental Motivation (language learning for more immediate or practical goals) and Integrative Motivation (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment), will help students to learn a second language for personal growth and cultural enrichment, on the first hand the communicative needs of learners; and, on the other, their attitudes towards the second language community. (Lightbown & Spada 2006, p. 63-64). Similarly, Attardo & Brown (2005, p. 228-229) argue that motivation is the interest of the students for their own learning or activities that lead to it. This interest may acquire, maintain, or increase depending on resultative and intrinsic elements "...learners get better at languages; then they want to study more." and "...students need to be interested and challenged by the lessons." On the other hand, Cook (1991, p. 72-75), mentioned Additive Bilingualism "L2 learning that adds to the learner's capabilities." and the last, Subtractive bilingualism "L2 learning that take away from the learner's capabilities".

Learning style

Since the late 1970s a great deal has been written about differences in learning. These preferences are determined for particular environments such as where, when, with whom, or with what lighting, food, or music you like to study... Woolfolk (1980). Some proponents of learning styles believe that the students learn more when they study in their preferred setting and manner Dunn, Beaudry & Klavas (1989); also Lovelace (2005) there is evidence that very bright students need less structure and prefer quiet, solitary learning Torrance (1986). Therefore, Woolfolk claims that the true learning can be difficult but the students can promote better strategies to learn. Likewise, Attardo & Brown (2005, p. 231) suggest, that these strategies can be: "Metacognitive, cognitive and social strategies." In metacognitive strategies students design or arrange their learning. In the meantime a cognitive strategy is a personal form of making learning easier for example flash cards. And finally in a social strategy students may form groups of study. As a result Brown states that: "Good language learners use a mix of strategies and know when to use the most appropriate one; they are very aware of their own learning."

Students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English

Interestingly, for some people aptitude and intelligence are the same thing and closely related but represent opposing views of human mental ability. For instance some students have the ability to learn the language easily and quickly, contrary to others who despite reach the goal, it costs to them a lot of effort. There are many perceptions about this topic, according to Carroll (2001), language aptitude has four factors or aspects. The first is phonemic coding ability, the ability to associate sounds and symbols. The second

is grammatical sensitivity, being good at grammar. The third is inductive language learning ability, the ability to notice patterns and relationships, and to extrapolate from examples. The last is rote learning ability, the ability for example, to learn lists quickly and easily. The Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) measures these abilities Attardo and Brown (2005, p. 228). Additionally, Cook (1991) states that:

Some people have more aptitude for learning second languages than others. But aptitude has almost invariably been used in connection with students in classrooms. It does not refer to the knack that some people have for learning in real-life situations but to the ability to learn from teaching. (p.75-76)

On the other hand some good learners achieve success because of their linguistic analytic abilities and some because of their memory aptitude. Skehan (1998, p.209) believes “language learning aptitude is not completely distinct from general cognitive abilities as represented by intelligence tests, but is far from the same thing”. In fact, “the findings that aptitude is an important predictor of differential success in L2 learning holds both for naturalistic context and for formal classroom instruction”. It is not absolutely specific; however, it is one of some elements which incise ultimate L2 competence (Saville 2006).

Taking into account the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process, there are some studies in which these factors have been put into practice, becoming in a useful tool to analyze more and understand better.

Firstly, there is a study by Heindselman, Mentac & Wesler (2007) which main objective was to discover how the seating arrangement of the classroom can affect the learning ability of the students.

For the purpose of this study, the method used was applied to the 22 participants signed up for the experiment in the Psychology Department of Hanover College where participants were assigned to either seat-altering or constant seating conditions, watched three ten-minute educational videos while taking notes.

After each movie, participants completed a brief questionnaire on their self-perceived knowledge, ability, and comfort, and at the end of the third video students took a quiz. Participants were either in row and column seating throughout the study, or were in half-circle arrangement for the third video.

Finally, like conclusions the study shows that the hypothesis where effects of discomfort caused by a change in seating would cause perceptions of ability of the participants, knowledge, and quiz performance of the participants to be lower, it was not supported. There was no significant effect of seating arrangement on ability of the participants, their perception of ability, or their and knowledge.

According to their results, it may be that a change in seating does not have any real effect on learning ability. In addition, it is possible that according to the relations and conditions between the participants they can feel more comfort or discomfort in the classroom.

Another thing is that, since most of the participants in the study were sitting in that front row action zone, they may have been more apt to pay attention and receive

higher grades on the quiz than someone who would have sat in the back of the classroom.

However, it is reasonable that students, who are more interested in a topic, will pay more attention and will therefore receive higher grades.

The next study was realized by Finn & Achilles (1999), whose purpose is to analyze the class size of the classroom and define how it can influence in the development and performance of the students.

In order to have a controlled scientific experiment the researchers conduct it orderly: first, students entering kindergarten were assigned at random to small classes (13-17 students), a regular class (22-26 students), or a regular class with a full-time teacher aide within each participating school. Of this form, teachers were assigned to the classrooms at random. The class arrangement was maintained throughout the day and throughout the school year. There was no intervention other than class size and teacher aides.

Second, the study was extensive. More than 6,000 students in 329 classrooms (representing 79 schools and 46 districts) participated in the first year, and almost 12,000 students were involved in the course of the 4-year intervention. It also had ample duration.

And third, researcher collected an array of outcome measures at the most appropriate levels, namely, individual pupils, their teachers, and their schools.

As final conclusions they obtained that it has engendered a large number of school, district, and state initiatives is even more unique. Mainly, they have learned that small classes in the primary grades are academically beneficial (especially for students

at risk), have positive impacts on student behavior, and have benefits that last through ensuing years. Adding a full-time teacher aide to a regular-sized class, in contrast, does not affect the academic performance of the class.

On the other hand, Ames and Archer (1988) reveals in their study how specific motivation patterns are related to the salience of mastery and performance goals in actual classroom settings. In general admittance to the school requires that students achieve an 80th percentile score on the Secondary School Admission Test.

Approximately 4-6 students were randomly selected from each English, math, science, and social studies class offered in the spring semester.

The findings from this study showed that mastery and performance goals provide a meaningful way of differentiating perceptions of the students about the classroom leaning environment. These perceptions of mastery and performance goals showed different patterns of relation with learning strategies, preference for challenging tasks, attitude toward the class and beliefs about the cause of success and failure.

Besides suggest that a mastery goal orientation may foster a way of thinking that is necessary to sustain student involvement in learning as well as increase the likelihood that students will pursue tasks that foster increments in learning.

Another study realized by Snow (2002) was made with the purpose to know what are the perceptions and experiences of secondary school teachers related to their use of classroom space, and clear the doubt that facilities and smaller class sizes contribute to the sense of teachers of well-being and effectiveness while poor maintenance and overcrowding were associated with feelings of frustration.

A qualitative design was chosen for this study and interviewing was the dominant strategy for data collection in conjunction with participant observation. And observation was the secondary data collection technique in this study.

Six formal observations were conducted, one in each participant of the classroom. All observations were overt, with the full knowledge and agreement, both oral and written, of the teacher and school administration.

Based on the perceptions of the teachers in this study, seven classroom design recommendations were identified.

These recommendations came from the teachers themselves as they reflected on classroom conditions and how they use classroom space, such as: construct adequate storage to house materials for instructional programs, particularly in laboratory sciences, plan for flexible arrangements of people, furnishings, and equipment by limiting built-ins and immobile fixtures, locate all technology resources together and away from windows, construct larger classrooms in secondary schools to accommodate student mobility and support instructional programs, construct additional space for computer workstations located in classrooms, build separate workspaces for teachers to use for planning and conferencing with parents, students, and colleagues and, create professional classroom environments that include computers with internet access and telephones with outside lines.

Finally, Abella and Salinas (2006), present another case study of the learning styles in low-level learners in a private school in Bogotá, which main purpose was to discover what roles do learning styles play in the English language learning process for

students with low academic performance and, which factors allow these students to explore their learning styles during the English language learning process.

In order to conduct this research, they chose a combination of case study and action research. After they had identified the students whose academic progress was slow, they signed a consent form giving them permission to undertake the research.

Then, a survey was applied in order to identify the learning styles of these students. The survey was interpreted and according to that interpretation, some activities were designed, and implemented in the classroom.

Along the process, some samples of the work of the students were collected in order to see how they were doing in the activities proposed.

At the end of some lessons, a five-to-ten-minute time period was allocated to have students interact and give their opinions about the development of the activities in a focus-group interview.

The interview was audio-taped in order to have detailed information. Having collected the data they began the process of analysis. The focus-group interview was a fundamental guide for the data analysis.

The writers conclude that the incorporation of learning styles facilitated the learning process. Besides, learning styles helped students to move forward in their learning process.

Concerning the research question about the factors that allow students to explore their learning styles, they affirmed that providing students with different learning environments allows them to explore their learning styles.

And finally recommend that for teaching low-level learners, a teacher must bear in mind several parameters for a more effective and motivating class for students. It is advantageous to have mixed-ability classes because when implementing varied activities not only low-level learners but also high-level learners will benefit.

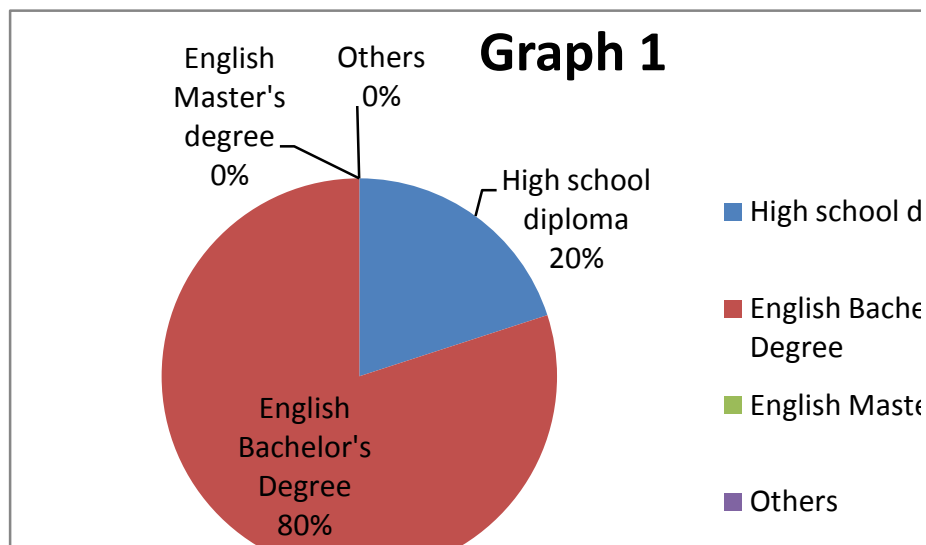
Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This section presents a quantitative analysis related to the factors that affect the English Language teaching-learning process. These factors are related to: teachers, students, classroom, and educational institutions. The information gotten from the questionnaires applied to teachers and students was tabulated. Finally, the gotten obtained information was used to do the analysis below.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?



Authors: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

A 20 % of the interviewed teachers have a high school diploma, and 80 percent have an English Bachelor's Degree, and none of them have a Degree in English Master, as outlined in Graph 1.

It was observed that most of the teachers had an acceptable level of education and used a high level of English language in class.

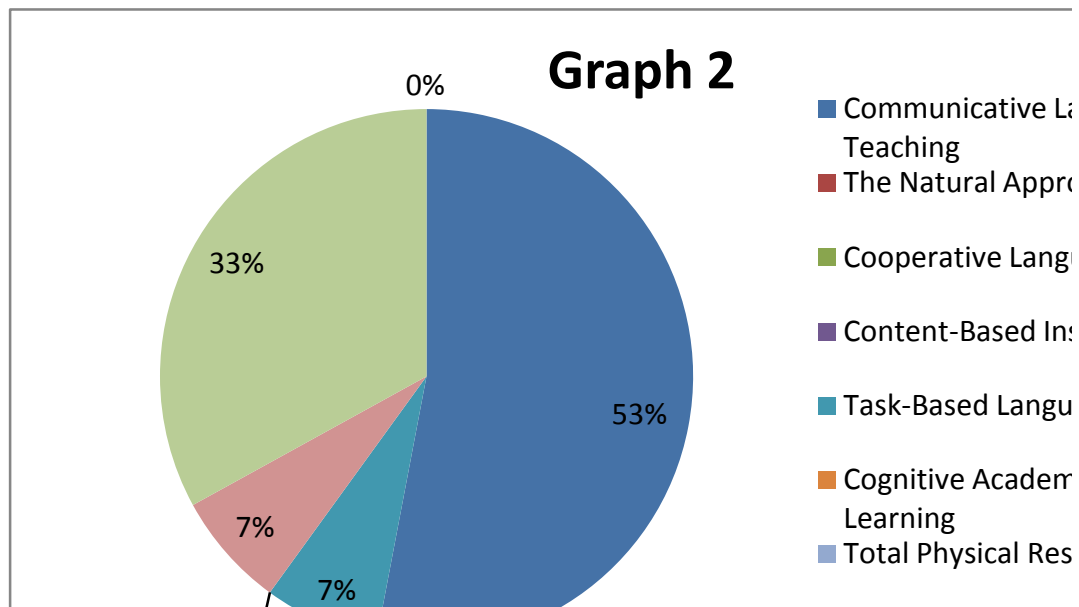
Besides, based on the interview applied to teachers, it was found that most of them have an effective academic development, even when they did not have a master degree; also, teachers affirmed that they are constantly training and attending to various seminars.

According to the results of the interviews made, the teachers' knowledge level obtained was between C1 and C2 of proficiency.

Therefore, this factor is crucial for English language learning process, because greater preparation for English teachers will help them to teach their students successfully.

Additionally, English teachers' level of knowledge is considered important, because it allows the quality of teaching and student learning. Moreover, teachers must be actors in quality education, stay actualized in order to be aligned with international standards with the purpose to make pedagogy able to support learning in a twenty first century age of constant change. (Senescyt 2012, p.2-4).

Which of the following methods was used in the observed classes?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

According to the observations done, 53% of the observed teachers used the Communicative Language Teaching approach and it can be said that it was the most used method, because in the observed classes it was noticed that teachers emphasized in the continuous interaction with their students as the main objective of learning the new language. Related to it, Littlewood (1981) states that “one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language.”

In addition, the observed teachers considered that communicative language teaching involves students in real communication with a successful achievement using communicative tasks that have the same importance as the accuracy of their language use. Howatt (1984) describes that the “strong” version of communicative teaching, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not

merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of language system itself. If the former could be described as “learning to use” English, the latter entails “using English to learn it”.

On the other hand, a 33% of teachers used the Grammar Translation Method. It was observed that these teachers analyzed and studied the use of grammatical rules, and then they practiced them through the means of translation into and from the mother tongue. Regarding to this aspect Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 5-7) state that Grammar Translation is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, following by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. It hence views language learning as consisting of little more than memorizing rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language.

But, according to the observations done, it can be said that this approach did not give students opportunities to activate their own knowledge, because, if they constantly apply translation, they will not practice communication, and, of course the speaking skill will always have little attention.

The danger with Grammar-translation, in other words, is that it teaches people about language but does not really help them to communicate effectively with it (Harmer 2007, p. 48-50).

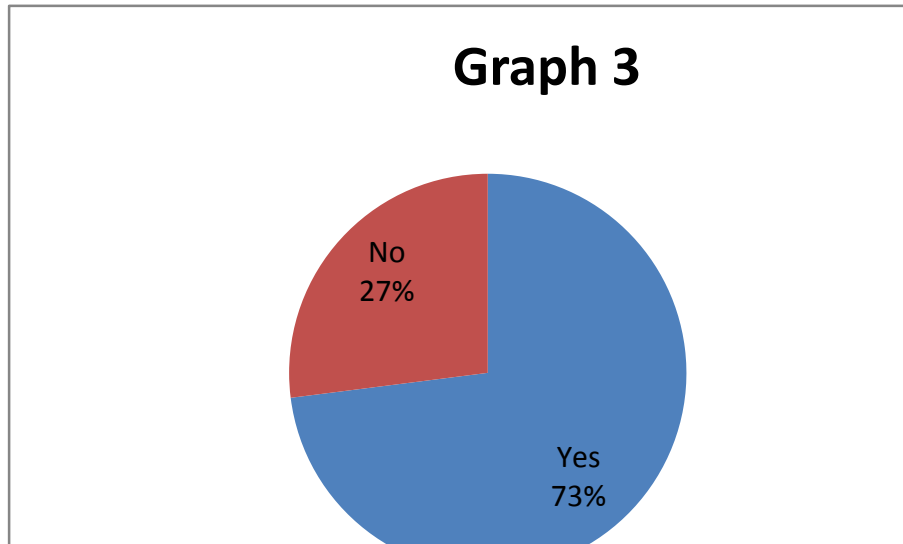
In contrast, a 7% of the observed teachers used the Whole Language Approach which is a movement against the fact to teach reading and writing when these should be taught as a “whole”; “if language isn’t kept whole, it isn’t language anymore” (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 108).

Teachers took into account that Whole Language Approach makes reference to the learning to read and write naturally with a focus on real communication and reading and writing for pleasure.

Finally, the 7% of teachers put into practice the use of the Task-Based Language Teaching approach. It allowed teachers to provide opportunities to their students to focus not only on language, but also on the learning process because teachers consider that tasks are activities or goals that involve real communication. They mentioned that real activities, in that language is meaningful to the learner, supports the learning process. At the same time, according to the observations of classes, it can be said that with the use of this approach students felt encouraged to use language creatively and spontaneously through tasks and problem solving, because it is noticed that when tasks are familiar to students, then they are more likely to be engaged and motivated.

The observed teachers focused their teaching in the application of the notion of task as a central unit of planning and teaching, making emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction. The key assumptions of task-based instruction are summarized by Feez (1998, p. 17) as “the focus is on process rather than product, basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning, learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in the activities and tasks”.

Do teachers use whole-group activities to teach their lessons?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The results obtained show that 73% of the observed teachers answered they use whole-group activities to teach their lessons. But, according to the observations done, most teachers were confused about the work through whole class interaction with the work through group works. Teachers did not know how important the aspect of whole-class discussion is in the group that is why it is relevant to say that it is important because the whole group work together towards a common goal and, through this activity a variety of ideas, opinions and experiences can contribute to a successful learning process.

Harmer (2007, p. 21-24) states that a whole class is useful for presenting information and for controlling practice (such as repetition and drilling). Whole-class teaching can be dynamic and motivating and, by treating everyone as part of the same group, it can build a great sense of belonging - of being part of a team.

Whole-class teaching is less effective if the purpose is to encourage individual contributions and discussion, since speaking out in front of a whole class is often more demanding and therefore more inhibiting than speaking in smaller groups.

Observed teachers mentioned that the advantage to work with this activity is that they have only one lesson to prepare, so both time and effort is saved, and, depending on the lesson the work might be relatively easy to be planned on.

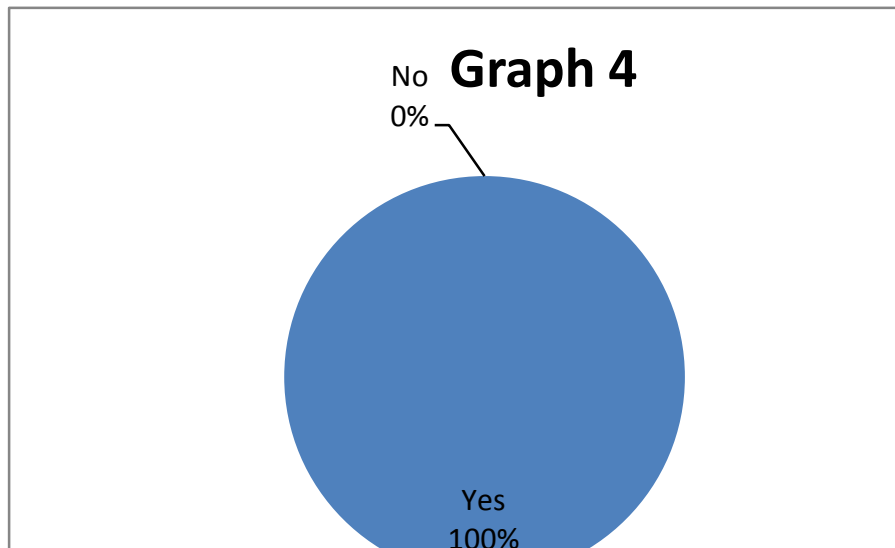
In addition, teachers considered as an advantage that in whole class teaching it is rather easier to record students' progress and keep good discipline.

From a personal point of view, whole group activities can stimulate a greater involvement in each member of the class, helping to lose the fear to speak, and share all type of knowledge according to the content of the given class.

On the other hand, 27% of teachers answered that they do not apply this teaching strategy in class because they believe that the class is considered as a whole and it is a simple approach for teaching within a common framework.

Due to the different kinds of intelligences students can have, task activities have to be varied, so attention and understanding might be gotten by the majority of them.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

It was found that all teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons, which represents the 100%. So, it was obtained that 0% of teachers answered no in this question.

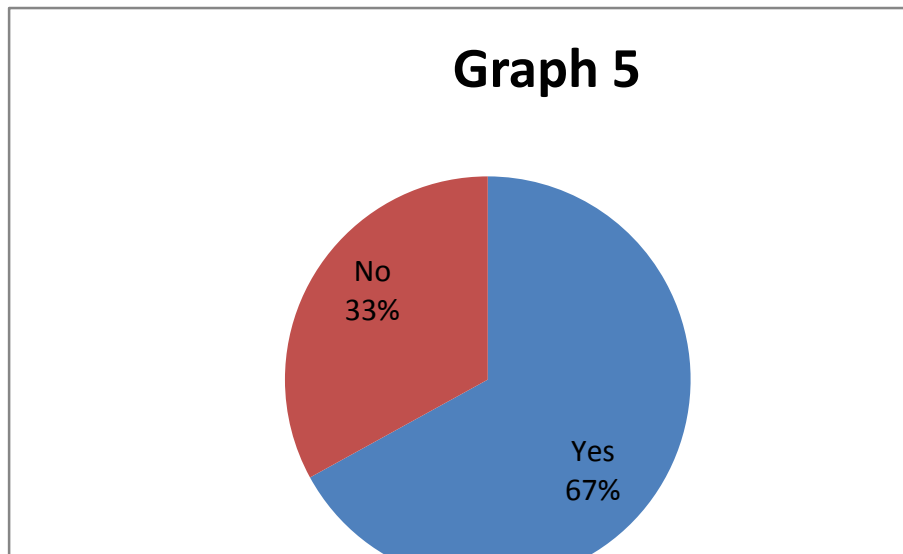
Observed teachers said that when they asked their students to work individually, this type of work allow them to do the assigned task in their own rate. They also said that with the use of individual activities students can apply their own learning style and they can use their own learning strategies.

Regarding to this issue, Harmer (2007, p. 40-44) points that individual work or solowork allows students to work at their own speed, letting them think in time, and to be individuals because they would consider their own individual needs and progress.

Observed teachers confirmed that individual work has positive aspects, because students can increase their creativity by providing clues to expand their answers obtaining a diversity of responses given from the different students' interests and ideas.

Also, teachers recognized that the main disadvantage of individual work is the lack of a positive and fruitful interaction and interchange of knowledge between classmates.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In reference to this question, it was found that 67% of the teachers answered that they use group work activities to teach their lessons. These teachers affirmed that group work activities provide more opportunities to practice the acquired knowledge with a great variety of activities, because it allows students to increase their creativity and to develop the interaction with their classmates. Also, observed teachers mentioned that group work activities allow students to work productively.

Regarding to this issue Harmer (2007, p. 40-44) states, groupwork and pairwork, they both foster cooperative activity in that the students involved work together to complete the task; in pairs and groups, students tend to participate more actively, and

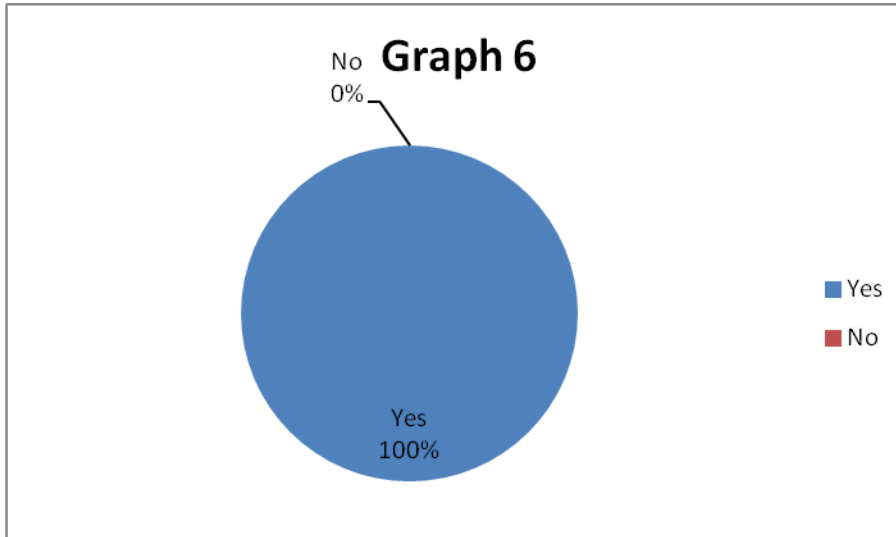
they also have more chance to experiment with the language; both pairwork and groupwork give students chances for greater independence. Another great advantage of groupwork and pairwork (but especially of groupwork) is that they give the teacher more opportunity to focus attention on particular students.

According to the observations, it was realized that group work activities have the advantage to provide a collaborative learning that involves active learning because it is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together. Some students felt that they had the support of their partners, and this gave them the opportunity to learn from each other as an effective learning strategy.

On the other hand, a 33% said that they did not use group work activities in their classes. These teachers mentioned that they prefer do not use this type of activity because it is difficult to monitor group work activities with big classes. Also, they consider they do not have enough space to organize group work activities due to the big number of students they have in some classes.

Based on the observations done it can be said that group work activities had disadvantages such as the fact that students may not get along with the people they are grouped or paired with, and this factor can influence in the correct development of group work activities. Also, the teacher did not know if all students contributed equally.

Do teachers use English most of the time in their classes?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

A 100 % of the observed teachers affirmed they use English most of the time in their classes. Most of them usually spoke in English, depending on the type of lesson and activities involved, and on the level of students. Also, it was observed that during the class teachers avoided using students' mother tongue.

It was observed that language in the classroom was genuinely used, teachers were able to react naturally in the class, and students often picked up the words and expressions that their teachers used to communicate.

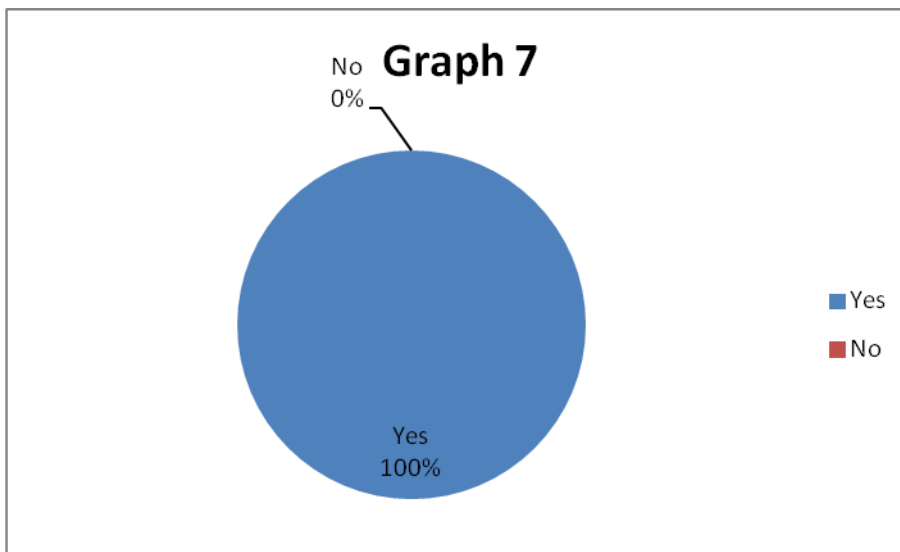
On the other hand, there were some circumstances in which teachers spoke in Spanish, translating certain information or instructions for a better comprehension of their students.

Furthermore, in the students' questionnaire, most of the students indicated that their teacher uses English most of the time in class. This fact was considered as a good way for managing learning because through these teachers ensured that all given

instructions were clear and understood by all their students. Thus, they avoided misunderstandings or loss of important information.

As Harmer (2007 p. 36-37) says, instructions must be simple but at the same time logical, properly planned, and structured to avoid misunderstandings on students.

Do teachers plan their lessons?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

According to the graph above, 100 % of the observed teachers indicated they plan their lessons. However, it was observed that not all teachers said the true, because many of them improvised their lessons, also their attitude was nervous, showing insecurity.

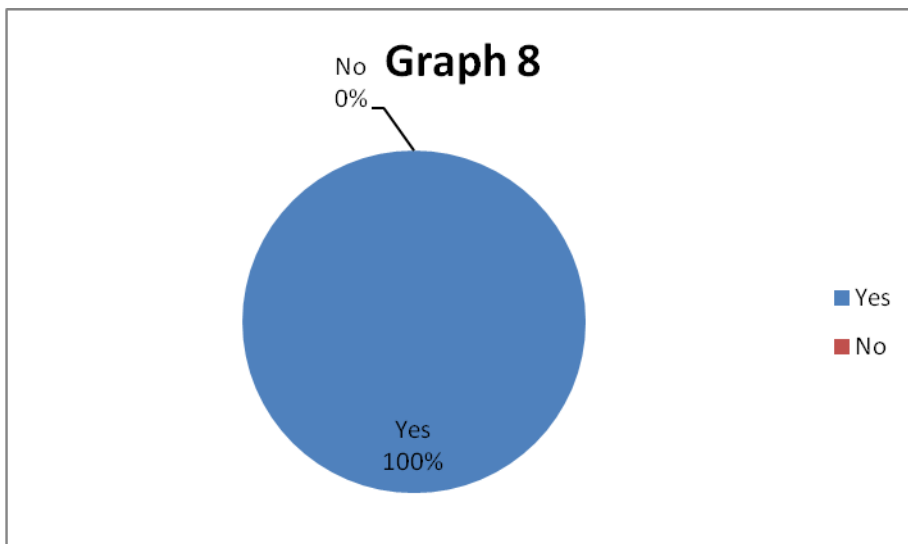
They did not have enough activities, materials, aids or equipments to develop the lessons effectively; for this reason, it was found that a few of them did not plan their lessons. Most of them just followed the textbook.

It was also found that some good teachers designed some type of plan when they walked into their classrooms, because they carried a simple checklist or a detailed two

page typed lesson plan that followed a prescribed format. This guide helped them to be prepared to teach, especially to make decisions, solve instructional problems, deal with classroom management issues, record progress, and be accountable to peers or supervisors.

It is stated that a lesson plan is an extremely useful tool, that serves as a combination guide, resource and historical document reflecting teachers' teaching philosophy, student population, textbooks, and most importantly the goals for students; for this reason, a lesson plan is convenient for teachers to develop their personal style for teaching and ensures that their class will get a balanced mixture of different kind of materials, content and interactions types throughout the course (Woodward 2001, p. 180-181).

Do teachers consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instructions to teach their lessons?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

It was found that a 100% of the observed teachers answered yes to this question. This means that all teachers considered aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instructions to teach their lessons.

Most teachers said that to succeed in the teaching-learning process aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instructions need to be considered before, during, and after the class was taught, so in this way, students gain a good comprehension of the activities they perform in class.

In reference to the instructions used in class, it can be said that, the observed teachers were very clear when giving instructions, they explained tasks in a very simple and logical form, avoiding in this way confusion in their learners. Also, teachers were outstanding to ask their students the classic question: do you understand? After this, the observed teachers also considered as part of their teaching the feedback form, because they affirmed that it is an essential part of the formative assessment process.

Harmer (2007, p. 37-38) describes that there are two general rules for giving instructions: they must be kept as simple as possible, and they must be logical. When teachers give instructions, it is important for them to check that the students have understood what they are being asked to do.

In relation to feedback, teachers from public high schools considered that it is a powerful tool to keep the objectives in learning both teachers and students, and that it always provides suggestions for the improvement of the learning-teaching process. According to their opinion, it could be affirmed that with a positive feedback, students can achieve goals and be realized about their progress.

So it can be said that good feedback becomes in something positive because it forms part of a classroom assessment environment in which students see constructive criticism as a positive thing and understand that learning cannot occur without practice.

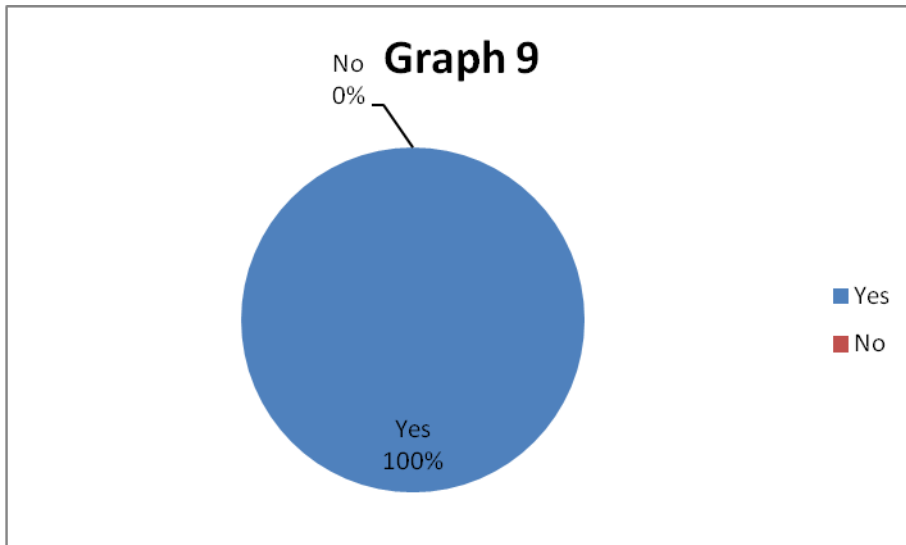
As Scrivener (1994, p. 9-11) states, many teachers believe in the importance of open, honest feedback, but find that in practice it can be hard to get. This is partly to do with the classroom atmosphere, partly to do with the questions asked, and mainly to do with the teacher's attitude and response to the feedback received.

Related to the observations done, it can be said that teachers gave feedback to their students helping them to improve specific points. Besides, a few teachers applied feedback immediately, during an activity, or delayed, at the end of an activity.

Furthermore, teachers used facial expression, body language, gestures, and intonation to correct mistakes as a typical feedback to show students that a mistake has been made, so it allowed the learners to notice it and to correct the mistake by themselves.

From a personal point of view, feedback could help students to apply self-assessment which can lead to an improvement in learning and to encourage their self-esteem.

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

One hundred percent of the observed teachers answered positively to this question and none of them answered negatively. The teachers said they consider the needs of their students to teach English successfully.

This was confirmed during the class observations, because it was notice that most of them accomplished their lesson by taking into account the activities that students prefer or like the most. For example, reading stories, listening to music, and singing songs, which in most of the cases were designed in the textbook used.

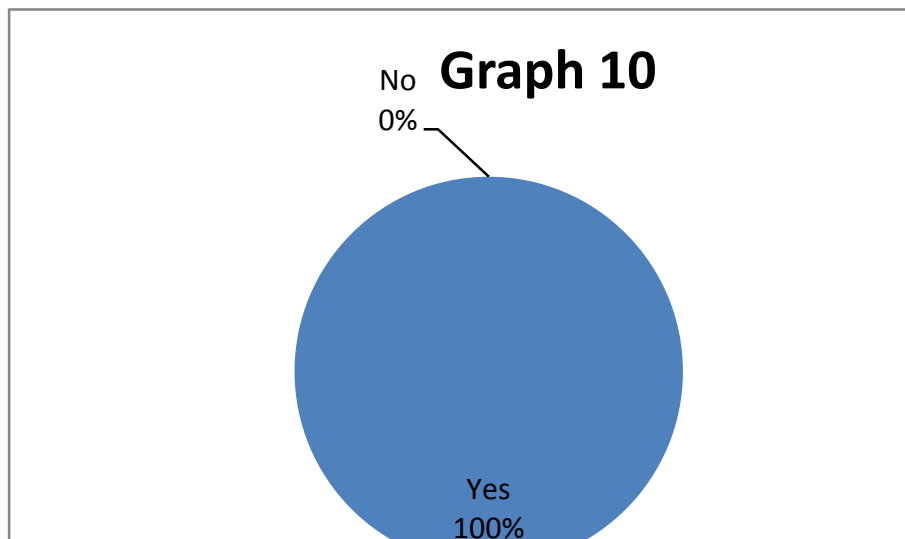
It was also observed that many teachers considered the students' level, because the instructions and expressions used in the classroom were clear for students.

Also, some teachers anticipated problems when students were confused. For example teachers used a translation method when they need to clarify the explanation about grammar rules or other special situations. Other teachers used different kinds of materials like visual aids or physical expressions in order to explain better their classes.

Besides, most teachers recognized growth in language learning and tried to emphasize the use of external rewards and extra points in the classrooms which motivated students to participate in class and to have a better learning.

As argued by Cook (1991), some learners do better than others because they are much motivated. That's why, teachers' obligation is to take into account students' needs to make them feel important in the teaching learning process.

Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In this question of the interview, it was found that a 100% of the observed teachers consider the English level of their students was important to teach it successfully. In each observed class, teachers tried to follow the textbook assigned for this grade level, and most of them provided the necessary level of support, guidance, and direction to each student.

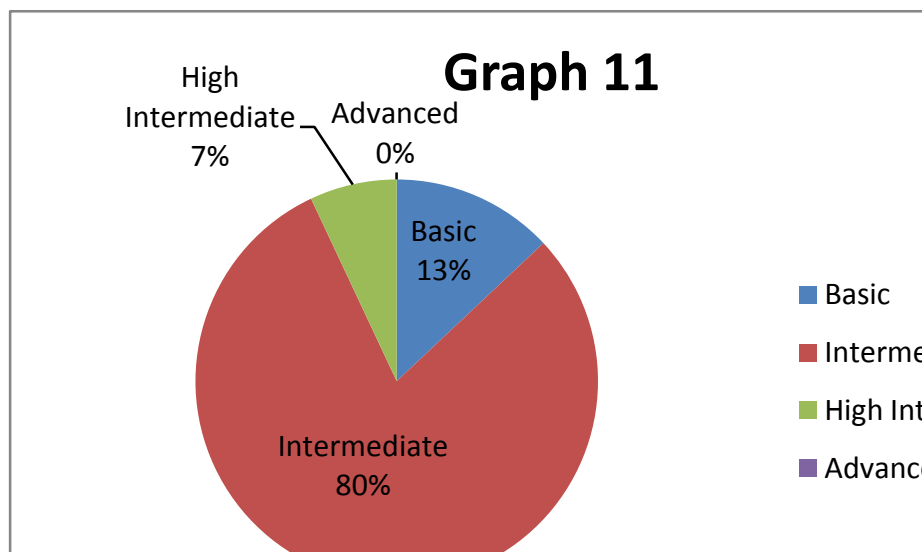
In fact, it was also observed that almost all teachers used a variety of techniques, tests, and observations in order to know the level of support that each student needed to

improve its English level. It was also found that students actively participate in class to comprehend grammar, develop vocabulary, and ensure the accuracy of their pronunciation.

Besides, students argued that they like the way their teachers teach each English topic in class, and also they said that the activities performed in class are often easy for them to understand.

Finally, it is important to say that in order to give an appropriate teaching it is relevant to determine the level of students. Also, the teaching process should be based on students' needs and using the adequate strategy for their own learning style.

Which is the level of their students?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

An 80 % of the observed students had an intermediate level of English, 13 % of them had basic level, and 7 % had high intermediate level, and none of students had an advanced level that means 0% as outlined the graph above.

According to the observation done, the level of English varies in accordance with each year of the students, because it was observed that independently of the education year, some students showed more fluency and knowledge than others, despite of the fact that the ideal situation should be that students' school year of 8th, 9th or 10th, have a level from basic to intermediate and, students of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of senior high school should have developed a high level of English.

In the observation done, it was found that the degree of competence of some students was between A2 to B1 English level, which according to the Common European Framework belongs to a basic to intermediate level of English.

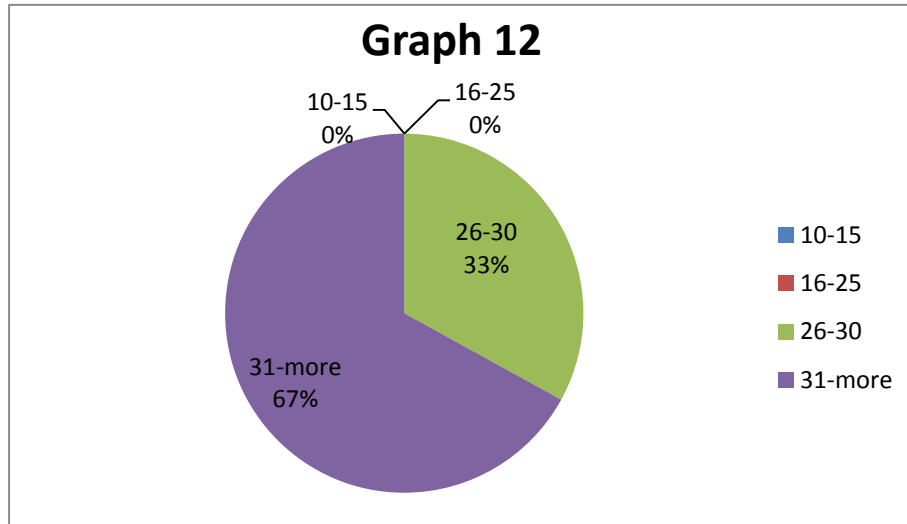
Besides, it is assumed that everyone must be on the same level because they are in the same year, but it was observed that some students have developed their skills more effectively than others, for this reason their learning is faster. This fact depends of the learning ability as argued by Carroll (2001).

Regarding to this aspect, it is considered that students who are at an intermediate level use English most of the time in class with correct grammar structures and good pronunciation; besides their actively participation in class was noticed. All these aspects reflected that some students had an adequate development in class, despite of the fact that they do not take extra classes.

In relation with this point, Attardo & Brown (2005, p. 228) state that language aptitude is a stable, perhaps innate factor separate from, but perhaps related to, achievement, intelligence, aptitude, and motivation. Aptitude is what allows people to learn easily and quickly.

Factors Concerning Classrooms

How many students are there in the observed classes?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In reference to this question, it was found that the 67% of teachers have more than 31 students, 33% of teachers have between 26-30 students, and none of the teachers have the range of students between 16-25 and 10-15.

Teachers mentioned that there usually are a large number of students in public high schools, but the effective management of the class depends on the appropriate techniques that they can apply in the classroom.

The observed teachers agreed that the key to succeed with large classes is being organized in all sense: timing, activities, pace, individual work, or groupwork; these aspects permit to achieve the objective to maximize the participation of the students in class.

Regarding to this aspect, Harmer (2007, p. 125-127) states that there are a number of key elements in successful large-group teaching: be organized, establish

routines; the daily management of a large class will be greatly enhanced if the established routines are recognized straight away by the teacher and students.

According to the observations done, it is considered that sometimes large classes, but do not more than thirty students, can provide opportunities to improve the interaction between classmates and, at the same time, it can create an environment of cooperation and encourage creativity and innovation.

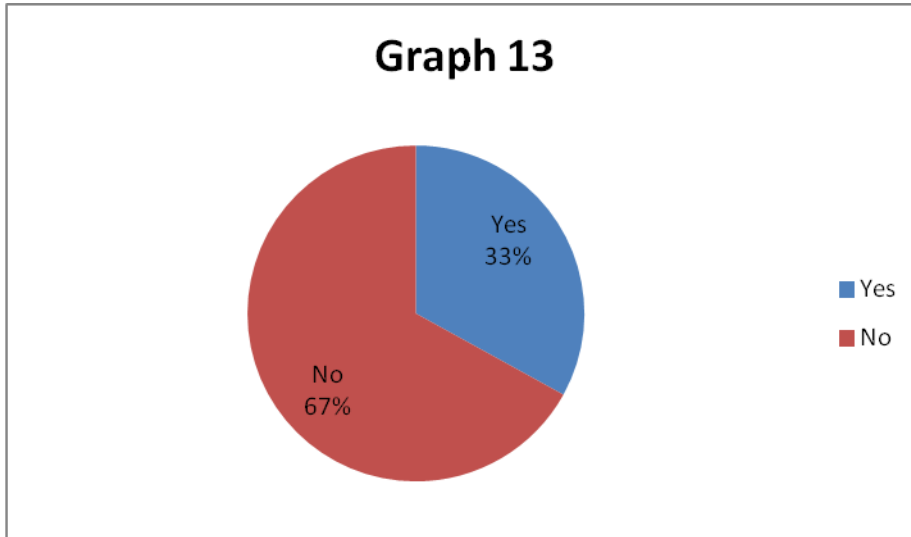
On the other hand, it must be taken into account that classes of more than thirty students bring difficulties to both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process, because sometimes it is difficult for teachers to have interaction with the students who are sit at the back, and for students to get individual attention; besides, it is even impossible to organize dynamic and creative teaching and learning sessions.

At the same time, students considered that the number of partners that they have in class do not benefit in the English language learning process, because sometimes the classroom is too noisy, and also because they cannot obtain the enough attention to get a more personalized teaching.

In addition, this situation often cause discomfort due to control problems related to discipline aspects, could have lack of individual attention, difficulty on evaluation, and problems of charging learning effectiveness.

Finally, it is important to say that teachers should consider an advantage the number of students that they have in their class in order to apply profitable methods, techniques, and strategies in their teaching process.

Do teachers feel comfortable with the number of students they are working with?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 13, shows that 67% of the interviewed teachers answered that they are not comfortable working with the number of students they have been assigned. These teachers confirmed their answers with the argument that although large classes have advantages in the sense of working in pairs or groups, which motivate the interaction between partners, at the same time, there are more disadvantages too.

Teachers mentioned that they feel that large classes often do not give enough quantity and especially quality in the interaction with their students; this implies that they do not have enough time to satisfy all the doubts that can arise during the class because there are many students in the classroom.

Harmer (2000) also finds out in his study that large classes bring difficulties to both teachers and students and to the teaching and learning process.

According to the observations, it can be mentioned that some teachers felt anxiety, which was caused for the number of the students they have in class; also, it was

observed that some students were very nervous when they had to participate in a large class. In addition, despite teachers have organized activities, the level of noise in a large class is even higher than in a small class, and the space is limited for activities that require a lot of energy.

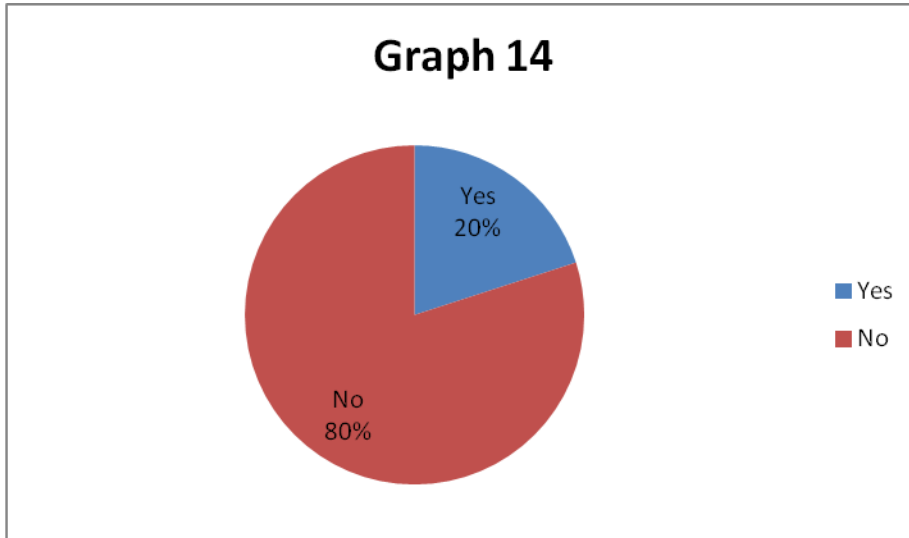
Regarding this aspect, Hayes (1997) classifies the problems associated with teaching in large classes into five categories: 1) Discomfort caused by the physical constraints; 2) Control problems (discipline aspects); 3) Lack of individual attentions; 4) Difficulty on evaluation; 5) Problems of charging learning effectiveness. These problems can be physical, psychological, but to a great extent technical.

From a personal opinion, it can be said that teachers and students looked upset by the physical space of their class. Students do not have enough space to move easily and this is an obstacle to develop the tasks in pair works or group works.

At the same time, teachers seemed to be worried about discipline control, because large classes often become too noisy. According to the observation done, in large classes it was difficult to have a personalized teaching because teachers did not have the opportunity to discover the needs of their students individually.

On the other hand, 33% of teachers answered that they do not have any problems with the number of students they are working with. These teachers mentioned that although it may be a bit more difficult to work with a larger number of students, all depends of a good planning of activities, a correct management of time, and most of all a willingness to teach many students like a positive challenge.

Do teachers have enough space to work with the group of students they have been assigned?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In graph 14 it was found that twenty percent (20 %) of the observed teachers consider that they have enough space to work with the group of students they have in class.

On the other hand, 80 % consider that they do not have enough space to work with the group of students they have been assigned because there are too many students and the physical conditions that most of the public high schools have are not appropriate enough to manage these number of students.

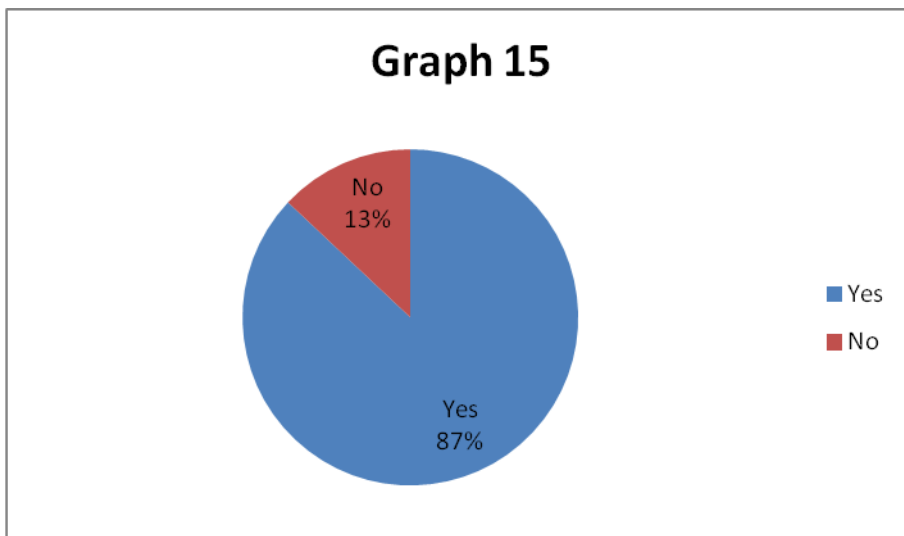
In many high schools the classroom size was very small, only in the upper grades they have more space, because the number of students is smaller.

According to the survey to students, some of them agreed that the physical space is not favorable for their learning process. In contrast to this, many teachers mentioned that they organize the class in all sense in order to make the physical environment more

comfortable for learning, for instance teachers use banners and pictures, which are of great interest for students. Related to it, Dörnyei & Murphey (2003) say that educators play an important role in constructing classrooms and schools, making students' environment more comfortable for learning.

As a result, it was found that good facilities are correlated with pupil achievement and with teachers work, but personally, it was observed that more improvements in the learning environment are attributed to get better attitudes for teaching and learning, and the improvement in the physical environment created among all users. That is, if both teachers and students have positive attitudes, these will help to accomplish daily activities more effectively and efficiently despite of the fact that they do not have enough space.

Do teachers arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The results obtained demonstrated that an 87% of teachers do arrange students' seats according to the activities planned for their classes; while the 13% do not do it.

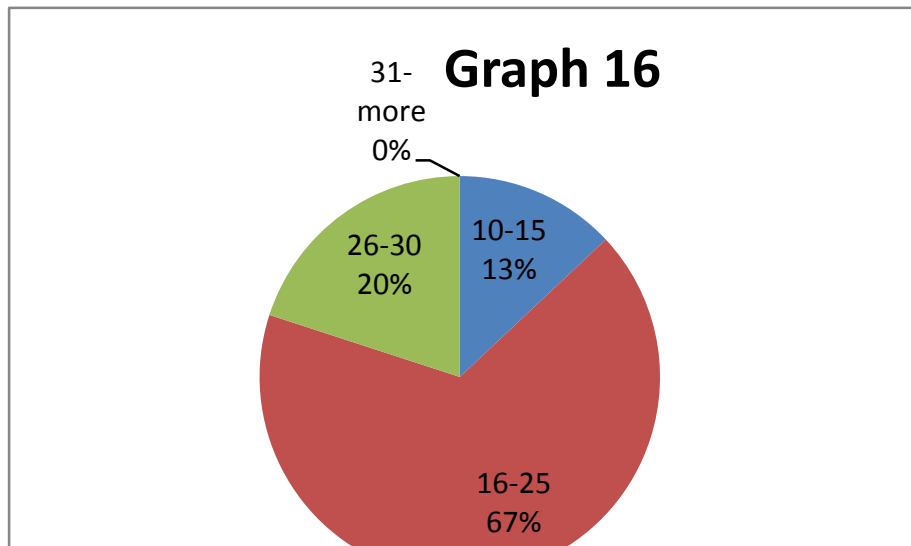
According to the observations done, there was not the opportunity for teachers to put in practice an effective seating arrangement. Also, based on the teachers questionnaire most of them considered that sometimes it is very difficult to arrange students' seats because of the time it takes to organize the place and the physical space to arrange students' seats.

Anyway, teachers assured that the positions and the different ways they can organize the students' seats in the class is of great importance, because this factor can influence in the learners attitude, behavior, and interaction. As Gower, Phillips & Walters (1983, p. 21-24) state, classroom furniture always affects the learning atmosphere to some extent but the choice will almost certainly be outside our control.

For this reason, teachers said that they usually use the traditional spatial arrangement with columns and rows of desks and chairs with the students facing to their teacher. According to the observations, it is considered that the classic location of the seats of the students is the most effective seating arrangement, because it allows to teachers move for all the class to monitor their students and, additionally, to save time.

Harmer (2007, p. 40-44) states that having the students sit in rows can appear somewhat restrictive, but there are advantages to this arrangement. The teacher has a clear view of all the students and the students can all see the teacher - in whose direction they are facing. If there are aisles in the classroom, the teacher can easily walk up and down making more personal contact with individual students and watching what they are doing.

How many students do teachers think is the appropriate number to teach English?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The results obtained were: a 67% of observed teachers would prefer a range of students between 16-25, a 20% would like a range of students between 26-30, and a 13% of teachers would prefer a range of students between 10-15, and none of the observed teachers would like to have more than 31 students to work with.

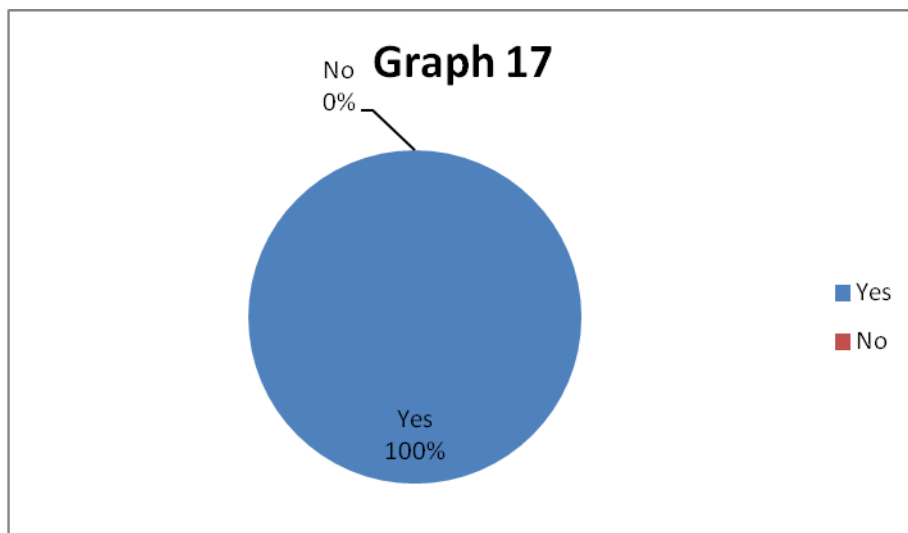
The arguments given from teachers made reference to an easier classroom management if its size will be smaller than the ones they already have. The observed teachers mentioned that in a small class they can have a better interaction with their students and consequently they would have a better classroom control, both in discipline and in noise.

Blatchford (2003) describes that while a teacher in a small class spends little time on control, in the large class interactions with the students largely involved a constant battle to keep students' attention.

Also, teachers said that the given tasks in class would be easier to check, and in this way they could satisfy the needs of all learners easily, because with a less number of students in the classroom, it would give the benefit of a personalized teaching.

According to the observation done, most teachers had many students in their classrooms and it was difficult for them to succeed in the teaching - learning process; for this reason, it is considered that small classes provide more opportunity of individual attention, so a teacher can spend more time with each student and also they can have a personalized education, having more time to work on concepts that they have problems with.

Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, Tape/Cd recorder, Computer (s), Projector, Smartboard, and supplementary materials)?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As outlined in the graph above, 100 % of teachers used teaching resources; however, it was observed that most of them did not have access to a computer,

television, projector or any kind of aids. Furthermore, they usually used a cd recorder to listen to music and work with listening activities.

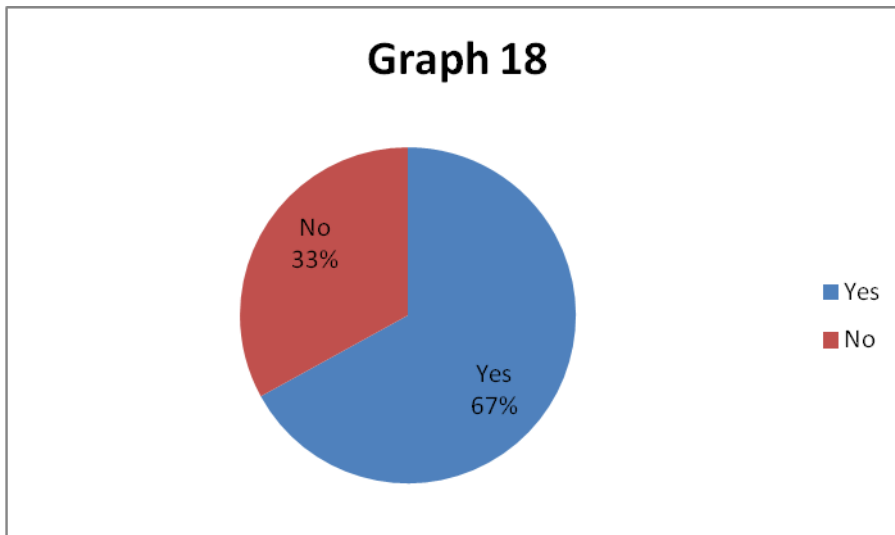
According to the observations done, students liked the supplementary material used by their teachers because these aids helped them to understand the topics better. In most cases they did not have computers, projectors or smart boards, they frequently went to the lab to watch movies and listen to speeches and dramas.

In addition, teachers argued that 75% of supplementary materials are used in classes. In fact most teachers think that supplementary materials motivate their students, and they can get their attention better.

This factor facilitates instruction, because teachers can use different resources to make lessons more effective and interesting (Gower, Phillips & Walters 1983).

Personally, it is considered that teachers should always use supplementary teaching materials to have successful teaching lessons.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Sixty seven percent (67 %) of the observed teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class, 33 % of them are opposite to this, because in many cases they only use a tape recorder or the white board. Also, teachers said that they do not have smart boards, computers, or projectors in the classroom, and that they are allowed to use the lab once a week.

It was observed that many teachers bring their own resources, for example, flash cards, visual aids, magazines, work sheets. Other teachers often worked with activities or aids of the same textbook, and used them to work in pairs or groups. For this reason, it is considered that teachers should bear in mind that resources for teaching their classes can be found everywhere, and should make use of their creativity to create supplementary materials in order to avoid boring classes.

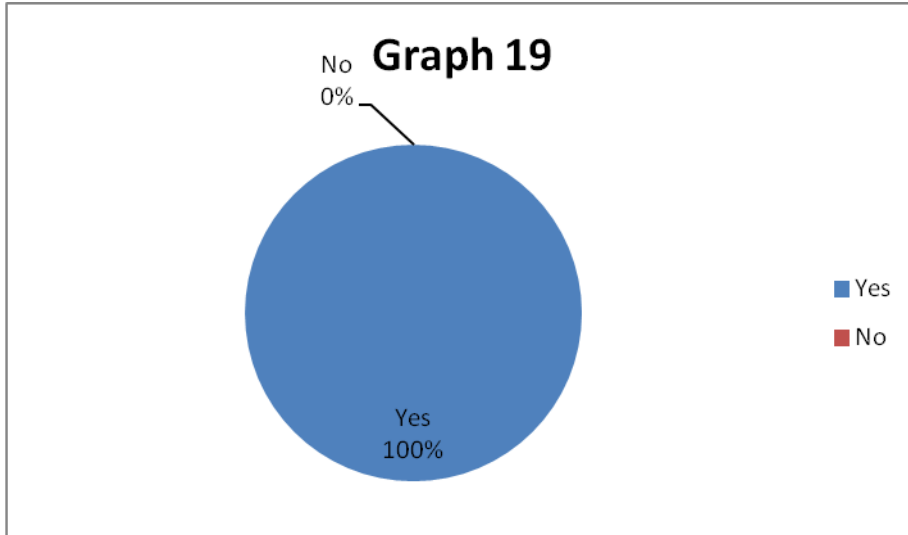
Teachers will bring supplementary materials such as: grammar sheets, oral reading, word lists, journals, puzzles and so on, to support instruction and free writing activities, they would use a cd recorder to listen to music, speeches and dramas (Clark & Starr 1981, p. 277-281).

It was also found that students liked the supplementary materials used by their teacher in class, because they could understand the topics taught in an easier and better way.

On the other hand, some teachers explained that using extra supplementary materials was a problem because of two main factors: time and the number of students. In the survey, teachers pointed out that the use of supplementary material is important in class, but most of them preferred to focus only in explanation.

Factors Concerning Educational Institutions

Do the institutions review teachers' lesson plans?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

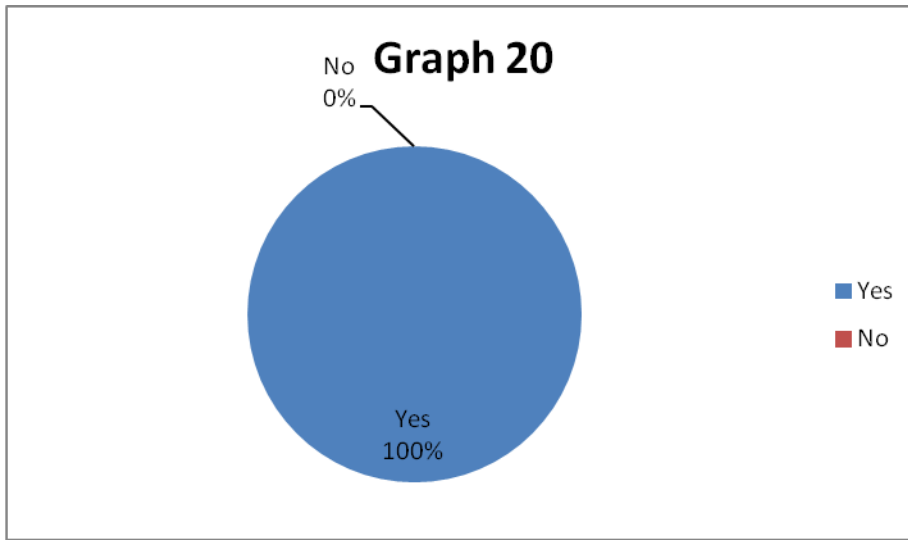
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

A 100 % of the teachers observed said that the institution review their lesson plans every two or three months approximately. It was observed that some teachers were not persuasive with this question, because it was noted the lack of planning; the instruction was not organized, in many cases the goal of the lesson, materials needed, and background information were missed; as a result, instruction became a random assortment of activities with little rhyme or reason.

It is relevant to indicate that an evaluation of a lesson plan gives teachers feedback and help. Also, whatever forms a lesson plan takes, it is a useful tool that helps teachers to make decisions, solve instructional problems, deal with classroom management issues, record progress, and be accountable to peers or supervisors (Celce 1991, p. 419-425).

For this reason, it is recommendable that the institution should monitor or review the lesson plans from time to time through principals and school administrators, or by fellow teachers.

Do the institutions monitor teacher's classes?



Author: Liliana Figueroa Fraga / Verónica Páez Romero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

A 100% of observed teachers said Yes to this question and none of them said No. Because they affirmed that they are monitored once a month approximately. Additionally the teachers said that they are conscious they have to receive a constant monitoring for the institution, because they think that this fact has positive aspects inside their daily activities, among them are timing, schedule, participation, strategies, classroom management, and learner interest.

According with the survey done, teachers mentioned that all the advice, suggestions, and recommendations that they can receive are very useful for their own personal and professional development and improvement.

Besides this aspect couldn't be observed, because the observations are done once a month with the presence of the respective authority.

At the same time, it is not relevant the years of experience that teachers have, it is not important their age; because the real significant thing is the fact that each day they can have new knowledge and acquire more experience as educators.

Nunan (1989, p.76) states, if we want to enrich our understanding of language learning and teaching, we need to spend time looking in classrooms. Before we can identify the particular observational tool we are going to use, it is desirable to think about what we want to look for or at. The next step is to decide why observation is likely to help us find answers to our question or resolve our problem. It is also useful at this point to consider the relevant characteristics of the setting, including space and equipment, in which the behaviour will be observed, and the constraints imposed by the physical settings.

According to the comments given for the teachers, it can be considered that classroom observation situations guide to have a dialogue between the observer, a person with more experience, and the observed teachers about how the class went, what worked well and why, and what areas of the teaching may need to be strengthened.

All this process is done with the objective to improve teaching and, at the same time, teachers take this process as an opportunity to have their own feedback with positive suggestions.

Conclusions

- This study evidences that the two main factors that affect the English teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools are class size and the number of students in the classrooms.
- Regarding the teaching methods applied by teachers in classrooms, the study reveals that the most used was the Communicative Language Teaching Method which was used to improve a receptive skill like listening and productive skill like speaking which are used in real communication.
- Data from the study shows that classroom space in Ecuadorian Public High Schools does not allow the development of an adequate education because they do not count with the appropriate physical environment according to the number of the students of each class and this situation can cause discomfort in the fact to get better attitudes for teaching and learning.
- This study reveals the lack of planning, which in some circumstances is the absence of teachers' preparation of daily lessons.
- This study demonstrates that teachers from public high schools have to deal with a big amount of students in the classrooms, which affects the teaching and learning process.
- This research evidences that most of the Ecuadorian Public High Schools do not have enough resources and equipment to work with, such as: computers, smart boards, projectors and so on, in order to provide a better education.

Recommendations

- The number of students in each classroom should be considered by directors of public high schools, since working with large number of students is the main reason to provide a poor education and also because this factor does not permit to have an effective teaching-learning process.
- High school authorities and Government should provide constant training to teachers to ensure a high quality preparation and a professional development, with the purpose to provide a high academic education.
- This research implies that educational institutions should permanently review teachers' lesson plans and methodology, which facilitates language teaching and academic performance of the students.
- The authorities should provide the appropriate materials and resources to teachers in order to help to increase students' motivation and also to improve the teaching and learning process.

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ANNEXES



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

High school diploma ()	English Bachelor's Degree ()	English Master's degree ()
Others: _____		

2. Do you consider Students' needs to teach English successfully?

Students' Needs (<i>age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()

3. Do you consider Students' level to teach English successfully?

Students' Level (<i>Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate , and Advanced</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()

4. Which is the level of your students?

*Students' Level			
Basic ()	Intermediate ()	High Intermediate ()	Advanced ()

5. Which of the following methods was used in this class? (check only 1)

Communicative Language Teaching	()
The Natural Approach	()
Cooperative Language Learning	()
Content-Based Instruction	()
Task-Based Language Teaching	()
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	()
Total Physical Response	()
Whole Language Approach	()
Grammar Translation Method	()
Others	()

6. Do you use whole- group activities to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

7. Do you use individual activities to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

8. Do you use group work activities to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

9. Do you use English most of the time in your classes?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

10. Do you plan your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

11. Do you consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

12. How many students do you have in this class?

10 - 15 ()	16 - 25 ()	26 - 30 ()	31 - more ()
-------------	-------------	-------------	---------------

13. Do you feel comfortable working with this number of students?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

14. Do you have enough space to work with this group of students?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

15. Do you arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for your classes?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

16. How many students do you think is the appropriate number to teach English?

(check only 1)

10 - 15 ()	16 - 25 ()	26 - 30 ()	31 - more ()
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------

17. Do you use teaching resources (TV, Tape/Cd recorder, Computer(s), Projector(s), Smartboard, and supplementary materials)?

YES ()	NO ()
Which ones? _____	

18. Do you consider appropriate the resources you have in class?

YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____	

19. Does the institution review your lesson plans?

YES ()	NO ()	
If yes, how frequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other _____

20. Does the institution monitor your teaching?

YES ()	NO ()	
If yes, how frequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other_____
		—

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

21. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

22. ¿Las actividades (juegos, trabajos en grupo y trabajos individuales) que se realizan en clase te motivan a aprender Inglés?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

23. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

Muy fáciles ()	Fáciles ()	Difíciles ()	Muy difíciles ()
-----------------	-------------	---------------	-------------------

24. ¿Te gusta la forma de enseñanza del idioma Inglés que usa tu profesor?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

¿Por qué?

25. ¿Tu profesor realiza actividades variadas que te permiten interactuar con tus compañeros de clase?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

26. ¿Tu profesor utiliza Inglés la mayor parte del tiempo en la clase?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

27. ¿Tu profesor controla la disciplina en la clase?

YES ()	NO ()

28. ¿Tu profesor les asigna un tiempo determinado para el desarrollo de cada actividad?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

29. ¿Luego de cada actividad realizada, tu profesor te explica en qué fallaste y en qué debes mejorar?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

30. ¿Las instrucciones que da el profesor para realizar las actividades en clase y extra clase son claras?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

31. ¿Consideras que el tamaño del salón de clase te permite trabajar de una manera cómoda?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

32. ¿Consideras que el número de estudiantes te favorece para aprende de mejor manera el Inglés?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

33. ¿Te gusta la forma en la que el profesor adecúa los pupitres para trabajar en los diferentes tipos de actividades?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

34. ¿Se utilizan en clase recursos tales como televisión, grabadora, computadora, pizarras inteligentes, etc.?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

GRACIAS!!!!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

OBSERVATION SHEET

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR (desde 8vo básica a 3ro bachillerato):	

1. Does the teacher consider Students' needs to teach English?

*Students' Needs (<i>age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()

* It can be recognized based on the variety of activities (visual, audio, audiovisual, realia, and on-line) applied, and students' reaction to them.

2. Which is the level of the students? (*Check 1*)

*Students' Level			
Basic ()	Intermediate ()	High Intermediate ()	Advanced ()

* It can be recognized based on the material they are using or placement done by the institution.

3. Which of the following methods are used?

Communicative Language Teaching	()
The Natural Approach	()
Cooperative Language Learning	()
Content-Based Instruction	()
Task-Based Language Teaching	()
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	()
Total Physical Response	()
Whole Language Approach	()
Grammar Translation Method	()
Others	()

4. Which of the following activities are used?

Whole-group activities	()
Individual activities	()
Group work activities	()

5. Which of the following aspects of the lesson plan were applied in the class?

Time	()
Lesson topic	()
Objectives	()
Warm-up activities	()
Introduction of the new topic	()
Guided or individual practice	()
Review/Assessment/Feedback	()
Materials and resources	()

6. Which of the following aspects have been considered by the teacher?

Discipline	()
Feedback	()
Activities management	()
Time management	()

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

10 - 15	()	16 - 25	()	26 - 30	()	31 - more	()
---------	-----	---------	-----	---------	-----	-----------	-----

8. Do students have enough space to move and participate in dynamic activities?

YES	()	NO	()
-----	-----	----	-----

9. Is the seating arrangement appropriate for the teaching-learning process?

YES ()	NO ()
NOTES: <hr/>	

10. Which of the following resources are there in the classroom to facilitate teaching?

TV	()
Tape/Cd recorder	()
Computer(s)	()
Projector(s)	()
Smartboard	()
Supplementary materials	()
Others	()

11. In which percentage does the teacher use English in class?

25 % ()	50 % ()	75 % ()	100 % ()
----------	----------	----------	-----------

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

A1	Where are you from? Where do you live?
A2	Where did you learn English? How long have you studied English? Which subject was the most difficult during your major?
B1	How long have you been teaching English? Which skill is easier for you to teach? Would you like to continue studying? Why?
B2	What are the advantages or disadvantages of teaching English in a “non-English speaking country”? What are the main problems a teacher faces when teaching English in Ecuador?
C1	What social benefits are derived from learning English? What is the most important reward of teaching English as a profession?
C2	What are the benefits that come from teachers staying more time in the educational institutions? What is the difference between teaching English as foreign language (EFL) and teaching English as a second language (ESL)?
TEACHER'S LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY:	
C2 ()	C1 ()
B2 ()	B1 ()
A2 ()	A1 ()